

## THE CENTRALITY OF ISRAEL AND THE DECENTRALITY OF JEWISH EDUCATION

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### *Jewish Schooling in the United States*

The preponderant majority of Jewish children and youth, if they receive any kind of Jewish education, attend the religious schools associated with the three major synagogal movements, the Communal Talmud Torahs (still functioning in some small Jewish communities) and the Day Schools (sponsored by the Orthodox and Conservative movements). In the last six or seven years, several, as yet small, Day Schools were established by the Reform movement. In all, there are approximately 3000 educational institutions of all types, elementary and secondary schools, teacher training schools and central community agencies for Jewish education. In a recent statistical study by the American Association for Jewish Education, it was estimated that 400,000 Jewish children

were enrolled in Jewish schools, a sharp decline from the 600,000 enrollment a decade ago. The study also estimates that in 1975-1976, a total of 80,000 children attended the Day Schools.

Jewish schooling then is generally supplementary to public school education. Children in the synagogue schools attend a maximum of six hours per week in the late afternoons and on Sundays. In the Reform religious schools, children receive two to two-and-one-half hours of instruction usually on Sundays, although in the last two or three decades, there has been considerable movement to increase the number of hours of instruction and the days of attendance. In most of the Day Schools the curriculum includes about fifteen hours per week of Judaic studies.

Jewish education in the United States is religious education since the schools are sponsored by the synagogues of the three denominations. Day School education is also religious since it is sponsored by religious bodies, and the Communal Talmud Torahs, too, adhere to a traditional curriculum. Secular Jewish educa-

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tion has small enclaves in the large Jewish communities, but has largely disappeared from the scene.

What percentage of Jewish children in the United States receive any kind of Jewish education? In almost all reports and statements it is affirmed that less than 50% of all Jewish children ages 5 to 17 receive any kind of Jewish schooling. The statements are usually made without the qualification that at *any one time* X percentage of Jewish children are enrolled. Rarely is it indicated that those who were not on the register at the time the study was made may have received some kind of Jewish education in their childhood — no matter how limited — especially between the ages of 8 and 13, and possibly during adolescence up to the time of confirmation.

It has been my experience in communities where I served and in studies I conducted that approximately 80% of all Jewish children receive or *have* received some Jewish schooling by the time they reach the age of 17. This is especially true in the smaller Jewish communities.

In the larger urban Jewish centers, approximately 70% of Jewish children are exposed to some Jewish schooling at one time or another. The *quality* of the Jewish education received and the *number of years* of attendance are another matter. As the late Dr. Alexander Dushkin stated it, "Jewish education in the United States is a mile wide but an inch deep." But it is necessary to clear up the statistical misinformation current everywhere that less than 50%

of all children are receiving a Jewish education.

Secondary Jewish education — post-*Bar Mitzvah* and post- *Bat Mitzvah* — is meager although a recent study published in the American Jewish Year Book indicates an increase in the number and percentage of youth enrolled in supplementary Hebrew High Schools and High Schools of Jewish studies.

In brief, formal Jewish education is in the main elementary education up to the age of 13, a terminal point for most Jewish children. The establishment of Day High School is an encouraging development. About 10% of elementary day school graduates are enrolled in the day high schools.\*

*Organization of Jewish Education.* As already indicated, Jewish schools are synagogue oriented. Each school is an independent unit, responsible to the individual congregation and its Board of Directors. However, each of the major synagogue movements and each of the Day School association has its own national commission on Jewish education, which has as its objective: coordination, consultation, preparation of curricular guidelines, the setting up of standards, personnel placement, and other related activities. Over the years, the national commissions have succeeded in adopting objectives and standards and have exerted some measures of influence. However,

\* Torah Umesorah, the Orthodox National Organization for Day Schools recently reported that Day School enrollment grew from 7500 in 1943 to 93,000 in 1978 and the number of schools grew from 30 schools to 516 in the United States and Canada.

the national commissions have no power of enforcement, accreditation, or accountability. Their influence is by and large moral and voluntary since all of Jewish education in the United States is a voluntary enterprise.

To coordinate the work of the different "school systems," and to develop and encourage a community approach many of the larger communities have established central agencies for Jewish education, largely supported by the local Federations and Welfare Funds. These bureaus or boards of Jewish education are remotely analogous to the public school boards of education, but they have limited power in the enforcement of educational standards, curriculum, and engagement of personnel. The principle of community responsibility for Jewish education has been generally accepted, but educational accountability to the central educational authority, local or national, is almost completely lacking. The community agency for Jewish education has to depend mainly on moral suasion that its work is for the benefit of the individual schools and the community at large.

On a national level, the American Association for Jewish Education, the national umbrella organization which has on its Board of Governors representatives of the denominational groups and national organizations, attempts to speak for Jewish education in the United States. It serves as the association of the Bureaus of Jewish Education, and provides a variety of services to Jewish communities, such as community studies and surveys, curriculum research, personnel placement, publication of pedagogic

materials and journals, and related services. The major emphasis is on the promotion of community responsibility for Jewish education.

Yet, while under conditions of voluntarism there does not exist a genuine local or national "system" of Jewish education it is remarkable how much coordination and cooperation has been achieved. The growing acceptance and financial support of the Day School movement in the last 25 years is one illustration of community support and recognition. Another illustration of community awareness of the need to strengthen Jewish identity is the increased allocation of funds to the Bureaus of Jewish education.

*Who Pays for Jewish Education?* Generally speaking, each individual school is responsible for its finances and budget. Parents pay tuition fees and the synagogue makes up the deficit. In some instances, local Federations provide limited subsidies or incentive grants through the community agency for Jewish education. The subsidies to day schools, and the Bureaus of Jewish Education, inadequate as they are, have increased considerably in the last decade. The funds allocated by the local Federations to the bureaus of education are used in the main for supervision, coordination, consultation, and a variety of educational services provided to the schools.

*The Curriculum.* In the afternoon supplementary schools the curriculum includes Bible study, prayers, holidays and festivals, Jewish history, and Hebrew. It is still by and large, the classic traditional curriculum adjusted to the conditions of the limited time available for

instruction. Under present conditions, the introduction of additional subjects such as study of Israel and the Holocaust would be very difficult. At best, in the elementary schools Israel could be integrated in the subjects presently taught. Furthermore, the children who attend four or five years at the most can hardly be expected to obtain a fundamental knowledge of Bible, Jewish history, the Hebrew language, etc. In the Sunday schools with two hours or two-and-a-half hours of instruction, the achievements may be expected to be even less, although there more students are likely to attend until the age of eighteen (confirmation).

On the high school level, the curriculum of supplementary schools is more flexible and the curriculum may include the study of Israel, the Holocaust, Soviet Jewry, spoken Hebrew, and modern Jewish problems. Here too, the limited time given to study will tend to restrict the achievement of basic knowledge and understanding of our rich heritage.

Recent studies have indicated that for Jewish education to have a positive learning residue and impact, a minimum of 2000 hours of instruction is required and since most students in the supplementary schools do not receive this minimum, the results will inevitably be minimal.

In the Day Schools, however, the Jewish studies program is more comprehensive and intensive. Students who attend elementary and secondary schools for eight years will acquire a good knowledge of the classical subjects and the Hebrew language.

Recognizing the lack of adequate time

for Jewish schooling and the rapid deterioration of Jewishness in the home and the community at large, Jewish educators have come to the conclusion that the summer months when the public and Jewish schools are closed offer a golden opportunity for Jewish study and living in a camp setting. The Jewish educational camp established in the last 30 years, also along denominational or ideological lines, supplements and complements formal Jewish studies and provides excellent opportunities for Jewish group living, for Jewish studies, and for the enjoyment of Jewish arts, along with the normal camp recreational and cultural activities. Jewish camping has made a significant contribution to Jewish education.

*Teaching Personnel.* Jewish schools are dependent more and more on part-time and often inadequately trained teachers who are not full-time academics. The main reasons for this condition briefly stated are: Jewish teaching is not looked upon as a profession. It has not achieved the social, economic, and intellectual status and recognition accorded to public school education. Jewish education does not provide the challenge and personal satisfaction young people are seeking today and does not provide a living wage commensurate with public school teachers' salaries. Only in the Day Schools is there some possibility that Jewish teachers will achieve professional status and recognition. Were it not for Israelis (many are students attending colleges), who make up the preponderant number of Jewish teaching personnel in many communities, many schools would find it hard to keep their doors open. Further

reference will be made below to this serious problem.

*Federation's Role in Jewish Education.* The relationship of the Federation to Jewish education requires fuller treatment than is possible in a summary statement. Suffice it to say that the local Federation which was organized to avoid duplication of fund-raising efforts and to provide social services for the poor has slowly evolved into a community organization concerned with American Jews *qua* Jews. A concomitant of this broader concept of social service has been the increasing concern for Jewish education. This interest has found expression in the increasing allocations to Jewish education, in community surveys and studies of the status of Jewish education, in the establishment of central community agencies for Jewish education, and the recognition that planning for Jewish education is as much the Federation's responsibility as is planning for other social services for Jews. Jewish education is turning more and more to the Federation for funding, and, in the last two decades, Jewish education has become an important item on the agenda of the Jewish community's activities. The American Jewish community has not as yet been successful in organizing a democratic *Kehillah*, but in the meantime, the Federation serves as the most representative organization for the raising and distribution of funds as well as in planning the social services of community sponsored organizations and institutions serving Jews locally, nationally, and overseas.

The overall budget of Jewish education in America tops \$250 million.

Much of this budget is raised through local synagogue endeavors. Yet here too the subsidy of Jewish Welfare Federations has been growing. When one notes that the budget of the Department for all of North America was \$300,000 per year one gets some idea of the amount of leverage one can expect to exert.

*The Role of the WZO Department of Education and Culture in the United States*

In the light of the variety of Jewish educational activities, what is the role of the Department? Is there a need for it? With its limited budget and personnel, can the Department realistically make a contribution to Jewish education? Is the WZO justified in allocating any funds for Jewish educational purposes in America? Is not the American Jewish community capable of taking care of its own cultural, religious, and educational needs? These are valid questions. Some see no justification for siphoning some of the funds raised for Israel for educational work in the United States. If there is justification, the paltry sums presently allocated to the Department in the United States can hardly have any impact on the on-going day to day educational work. It is an exercise in futility, assert the skeptics. Furthermore, the WZO is a political organization and skeptics question whether education can function effectively in a political framework.

I often pondered these questions during my ten-year incumbency as the Director of the Department and, more recently upon my retirement, have reviewed as

objectively as is possible the role of the Department and its place in Jewish education in the United States. I have come to the conclusion that there is a critical need for the Department. It is based on the contention that the *Israel Dimension* in its broadest interpretation—historical, religious, political, cultural—as related to the destiny and future survival of the Jewish people has not as yet found its rightful place in American Jewish education. Jewish life has been radically transformed in the last 80 years, since the first Zionist Congress, and especially as a result of the Holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel, but Jewish education does not as yet reflect the transformation in any substantial changes. Jewish educators in the United States have recently become enamored with and enthusiastic about alternatives in Jewish education, but have not seen Zionism and Israel as the most viable alternative. In my view, Jewish education has to be brought up to date, with Zionism and Israel. This presents a challenge and opportunity for the WZO Departments of Education to undertake. It is my conviction that the time is propitious for radical changes and the WZO can make an important contribution in this effort. This is why there is a need and a justification for the WZO Department of Education in America.

Recognizing full well the voluntary and independent nature of the American Jewish School “system,” the Department did not attempt to duplicate what was being done by Jewish schools. The Department did not have the funds nor the personnel, nor could it foist its

“authority” on them. Consequently, it developed its activities in cooperation and conjunction with the educational establishment, but encouraged the initiation and introduction of “Israel ingredients” in the school programs. It provided educational services no other agency was able to offer and under certain conditions, undertook to conduct such projects and activities that were acceptable to Jewish schools.

Accordingly, three interrelated and interdependent goals served as the framework of the Department’s activities:

1. The promotion of a deeper understanding, knowledge, and appreciation of Israel and its role in the life of the Jewish people, past, present, and future; the introduction of the study of Israel in Jewish schools; provision for living and study experiences in Israel.
2. The Hebraization of Jewish education by the promotion, intensification and enhancement of Hebrew language and literature study and instruction.
3. The promotion of the concept of the unity of the Jewish People as an imperative force for cultural, religious, and ethnic survival with Israel as its center.

The question has been raised: Is not teaching for *aliyah* an expected goal of the Department’s work? Will the work of the Department lead to *aliyah*? My answers are in the affirmative, but the answers must be stated in educational terms. Education is a long-time process. If it is to have any meaning, knowledge and experience must be “internalized,” digested, and assimilated

The fundamental objectives of Jewish education as expounded by the late Hayim Greenberg are *Jewishness*, identification with and commitment to the Jewish people and its heritage. Zionism and *aliyah* should be the natural by-products and the outgrowths of an intensive education. Jewish education becomes authentic when it leads to commitment and action as expressed by our sages: *Talmud Torah hamaivi l'y'dai maaseh*. Steps along the way to the achievement of this goal include: Study of the Hebrew language, Bible, and history, and short- and long-term periods of study and living in Israel. These curriculum components will do more to motivate Jewish youth to come to Israel than propaganda and exhortation to go on *aliyah*.

Should the Department be enabled to carry out its cardinal objectives, *aliyah* would flow out of a sense of knowledge and identification with the needs of the Jewish People in the fulfillment of *Mitzvat Eretz Israel*.

*Brief Outline of the Department's Work.* The Department initiated and developed a two-pronged interrelated program: One was directed to Jewish schools in the United States, and in general terms this part of the program may be described as introducing *Yeda* (Knowledge of Israel) into the school curriculum, the so-called cognitive element in Jewish schooling. The second part involved a short- or long-term experience in Israel, and may be defined as *Todaah* (experience, consciousness, commitment, and involvement—the affective in educational terms).

Both parts of the program were based

on the premise and conviction that Israel is focal in Jewish life today and must perforce be reflected and incorporated into the Jewish schooling of our children and youth.

With respect to *Yeda*, the Department concentrated its efforts on the introduction of study courses on Israel in the Jewish school curriculum either as a separate subject of study, or as a subject integrated into all Jewish subjects taught in the school. To this end, the Department engaged in a multitude of projects, activities, and programs designed to penetrate the Jewish school in order to place Zionism and Israel on the agenda and to stimulate the inclusion of such studies in the curriculum of all types of schools. A variety of pedagogic and consultative services was offered and provided. Educational materials were published, including: film strips, *Yom Haatzmaut* programs, lesson plans on Israel, booklets on Zionist personalities, educational materials on the observance of special events, questions and answers on Israel, Wall Newspapers, quizzes on Israel, Bible, and Zionism published in major Anglo-Jewish papers.

To be frank, it cannot be said that the Jewish school curriculum has been change radically, nor that Israel now occupies a central role in Jewish schooling, nor even that the study of the Hebrew language has been significantly intensified. Many Jewish educators and lay leaders—although they are deeply concerned about Jewish identity and the crisis in Jewish education—still do not accept the idea that the study of Israel can have an important influence on the quality of Jewish education and the

quality of its teaching personnel. In all candor it cannot be said that the Department has been fully recognized for its contribution to Jewish schooling among the plethora of Jewish schools and conflicting concepts of education. But I can bear testimony to the fact that many of the activities in the area of *Yeda* have met with increasing success and recognition and hundreds of schools and thousands of children and youth have profited. Three such activities are mentioned briefly. The project *Yediat Israel* (Knowledge of Israel), which has as its major goal the introduction of teaching about Israel in the school program, was initiated some 9 years ago. Currently hundreds of schools and some 20,000 children and youth take part in it and take the annual *Yediat Israel* examination. The program has made a definite and positive impact and together with the National Commission on the Teaching of Israel launched two years ago has led to the preparation of experimental curricula, teachers' workshops, and seminars, and it promises to inaugurate changes in the curricula of schools of different outlooks and ideologies.

The second example is the National *Hidon Hatanach*, in which in the 20 years of its existence thousands of children have participated in their local communities and hundreds on the national and international levels. The *Hidon Hatanach* has had a profound influence on the study of Bible and has achieved national recognition for its accomplishments.

Hebrew language instruction, teachers' seminars, assistance to Hebrew language

publications, and related programs are important features of the Department's work. A significant contribution was the establishment of Ulpanim in New York, Miami, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, Milwaukee, Baltimore, and other cities as well as the services provided to instructors of Hebrew in numerous colleges and universities.

As to the second part of the Department's overall program, that of *Todaah*, a learning and living experience in Israel became crucial and focal. The short- and long-term stay and study in Israel included youth of *Bar* and *Bat Mitzvah* age, high-school youth, college undergraduates and graduates, teachers, directors of education, and others. The Department urged central agencies for Jewish education and local welfare Federations to make it possible for high-school students and teaching personnel to spend time in Israel as part of their schooling and in-service education. There was some measure of success in this effort, especially in providing partial scholarships for high-school youth.

On the basis of studies and correspondence, it has become clear that the influence on all those who spent a period of time in Israel has been beneficial and positive: the participants have expressed greater understanding of, and enthusiasm for, their Jewishness, a strong desire for continuing their Jewish education, a deeper attachment to Israel, fuller involvement in Jewish affairs on the college campuses and in the Jewish community as well as determination to return to Israel for further study, and some have indicated plans to come on *aliyah*.



In the promotion of a year of study in Israel, the Department has thus far achieved limited success *quantitatively* owing to the hesitation of parents to send their adolescent children away for a year of study abroad, the uncertain security situation in Israel, the paucity of scholarship funds, the lackluster achievements of some of the programs, poor selection and screening of candidates, and the failure of Israelis to understand American youth.

*Qualitatively*, outstanding success has been achieved at Kfar Blum, where a 10th grade program was established in 1969.\* Other programs have had less success (e.g., at Alonei Yitshak), but the Department has continued to promote high school study in Israel and has organized three or four successful groups of 10th and 11th graders at Yemin Orde, Givat Washington, Shefayim, Ein Hachores, and Ein Dor, in cooperation and co-sponsorship with the Conservative movement, ORT, and the Reform Movement. The Department has lent its support to the Miami High School program in Israel and the Eisendrath Exchange Program of the Reform Movement, which offer study opportunities for eight weeks (five sessions annually) and six months duration, respectively. The Zionist Organization of America established the Mollie Goodman Academic High School

at Kfar Silver in 1967. Despite early suspicions by the ZOA of the Department's motives in its attempts to extend its cooperation to the ZOA in the recruiting and screening of applicants, in the last five or six years a friendly and cooperative relationship has been achieved.

It is important to note that while in any one year the number of high-school youth in Israel study programs has been small, the impact and influence on those who have participated in them have been outstandingly positive. Most continue their Jewish education, are active in the local Jewish community and on college campuses, return to Israel for further study, and some have settled in Israel permanently.

An activity of the Department is the recruitment of students for Machon Greenberg in Jerusalem. The major objectives of the Machon are to prepare teachers for Jewish schools in the Diaspora and to provide an opportunity for those who wish to prepare for Jewish community service to deepen their Jewish knowledge. For several years, the Association of Hebrew Teachers Colleges in the U.S. (IGGUD) sent their third-year students to study at the Machon. In 1968, when the Center for Jewish Education in the Diaspora at The Hebrew University was established, the IGGUD discontinued its arrangement with the Department and began to send its students to the Center at the University. The reason was the prestige of the University and accreditation by the home universities of The Hebrew University courses. Machon Greenberg is not recognized by the Israeli Committee on Higher

\* It is estimated that 25% to 30% of the two hundred students in the program have come on *aliyah*. Others have been in contact with Kfar Blum and have returned for further study and visits. A great deal of the success of the program is due to the outstanding leadership of Pinchas Rimon of Kfar Blum.

Education, and while some of the universities do recognize the studies at the Machon for credit, all of the universities give full recognition and preference to the studies at The Hebrew University.

The Department has continued to send some thirty or forty young men and women to the Machon, but very few of them come from the Hebrew Teachers Training Schools, few are qualified Judaically to pursue a course of study on a college level, and few have plans to make Jewish teaching their profession. Arrangements have been made by the Department with several colleges and universities to send their students for further study to the Machon. The arrangements have met with limited success. The Machon, which now calls itself the Greenberg College, will have to undergo radical changes to attain academic status and recognition in order to carry out its main purposes and objectives.

#### *Ideological and Practical Issues in Need of Clarification*

*Educational Authority.* As already noted, the Department's approach in the development of its work was practical and pragmatic. Nevertheless, the three objectives of the Department were within the ideological framework of the Jerusalem Program which posits as the guidelines of Zionism: the centrality of Israel in Jewish life, the unity of the Jewish People, intensification of Jewish education in the Diaspora, and greater emphasis on the study of the Hebrew language. The practical translation and implementation of the Jerusalem Program into

educational terms was central in the Department's activity. My own long and varied experience in Jewish education led me to the belief and conviction that education *maaseh* (action)—the *Naaseh venishma* concept—should take precedence over the efforts to expound ideological principles and theories which are often not easily understood nor readily accepted. Through the practical educational projects and activities related to Israel which are dictated by existential conditions, educational theories take on bone and flesh, and educators and laymen, too, will begin to feel and recognize the effects of Israel's role and significance educationally and this will lead to the acceptance, directly and indirectly, of the centrality of Israel, the unity of the Jewish people, and the need to intensify Jewish education.

The professional head of the American Association of Jewish Education was of the opinion that Israel is merely another ideology or "ism" in American Jewish life and like all the other "isms" deserves a prominent place in the midst of the diversity in Jewish life and education. The Department's role is to carry out the educational mandate of the World Zionist Organization. I contended that Israel and Zionism cannot be considered an "ism" like other extant ideological movements and "isms" but that Zionism and Israel are pervasive in Jewish life today and transcend all the "isms," because unlike the others Israel is the pole around which Jewish life revolves and all factions accept the underlying principles of Zionism and the State of Israel, although they give the subject a coloration and interpreta-

tion consistent with their own religious and cultural orientation. In short, there is more of a consensus in regard to Israel and Zionism than exists among the separatist and sectarian interests and factions. Indeed, the editor of *Commentary* came to the startling conclusion several years ago that American Jewry has become "Zionized." •

The Department did not become directly involved in the theoretical discussions but as already indicated the underlying principle of its work was the Zionist credo of Israel's central role today. The question of Israel-Diaspora relations and the meaning of Zionism today was given over by the American Zionist Federation to a Commission on Zionist Ideology, consisting of a group of leading Zionists and academicians. A similar commission was set up in Israel. To date, a consensus on the meaning of Zionism today has as yet not been arrived at.

*Centrality of Israel — only de Jure.* But the day-to-day educational work had to go on. Keeping in mind the ideological trends and the diversity of educational enterprises in the United States, the Department asked itself the basic questions how it could become a significant factor in the multiplicity of educational activities and affect the conceptual outlook and day-to-day curricular practice.

The Department in New York worked on the premise that curricula and projects initiated by the Department in Jerusalem or in New York without the direct involvement of American educators cannot be dictated, imposed, or implemented. Even if such program were

undertaken, it would be with apathy and reluctance.

Consequently, a National Advisory Committee was established consisting of professional and lay representatives of the Jewish educational organizations and institutions. The Committee was not only to serve as a "sounding board," but also to enlist the involvement and cooperation of American Jewish educators in planning and projecting programs designed to meet the needs of American Jewish schools.

The Department in Jerusalem welcomed the establishment of the Committee but did not fully understand the educational implications and applications. Differences arose, such as: should the Department in Jerusalem prepare curricula and materials for use in the United States without prior consultation with American educators and the Department in America? Should the Department in Jerusalem be in direct contact with Jewish schools in the United States or should all contacts be channeled through the American Section offices in New York? Also, should programs and projects directed to American Jewish schools be initiated in Israel or should they be planned jointly? Should there be a preliminary approval of personnel selected in Israel for educational assignments by the Department in the United States and should such personnel be primarily responsible to the Department in Jerusalem and under its direct supervision?

The issues that arose were not only questions of administrative authority but were related to educational outlook and methods of implementation. For example,

*hidonim* (contests) are favored in Israel as an educational instrument. American educators see competitive quizzes and contests as educationally unproductive; subsequent failures to achieve goals that were set in Jerusalem prove frustrating. Or the Department in Jerusalem might launch a master teachers program in Israel against the advice of American educators and then the program fails in America due to lack of confidence in the scope, content, and method of the program and skepticism about the possibility of recruiting qualified candidates. This is not to say that the United States should have the veto power over programs initiated in Israel, but American opinion should be given careful consideration before, not after, a program is undertaken.

To be sure, during my incumbency, a *modus vivendi* was arrived at as to program and methods of operation. Gradually the Department in Jerusalem came to understand and recognize the importance of "a local address," that all contacts with schools should be the prerogative of the Department in the United States, that involvement of American Jewish educators was imperative, and that this was the most effective and efficient way of conducting Zionist education in the United States.

The Department's authority in the United States has a broader dimension. The WZO Department of Education and Culture cannot or should not be viewed as a national educational organization with broad authority to prepare, introduce, and supervise curricula; to train and supervise teachers; and to hold schools accountable for their work,

achievements, and failures. This is not possible in the United States with its voluntary, separatist, and fragmented "system" of Jewish education. It cannot be expected that such recognition of the Department's status will be forthcoming, nor is it conceivable that the vast funds required would be made available, even if, in principle, the Department were accepted as an umbrella national Jewish educational agency.

*The Department and the American Zionist Federation.* What is the relationship of the Department to the American Zionist Federation, if any? At the World Zionist Congresses in 1972 and 1978, resolutions were adopted calling for the Zionist Federations the world over to assume comprehensive authority and responsibility for coordinating and overlooking the activities of the different departments of the WZO and to incorporate them into their organizational structure. Were these resolutions to be put into practice, the Education Department in the United States would come under the jurisdiction of the American Zionist Federation. There has been some discussion about this structural change, which would move the jurisdiction for Jewish education from the American Section of the WZO to the AZF, but the issue will ultimately have to be resolved by the WZO executives in Israel and in the United States. It is difficult to predict what such a change would mean for the Department in budget and program. In the meantime, the Department has lent its cooperation and guidance to the American Zionist Federation in the development of its Education Committee and also provided

limited funds for organizing Ulpanim under the auspices of the American Federation in several communities

*The Two WZO Departments of Education.* The two global Education Departments of the WZO\* have their correspondent branches in the United States, each with its own director, staff, and administrative offices. The relationship between the Departments in the United States has been cordial, amicable, and cooperative on a personal and professional level. Each Department functions in its own sphere of activities and in some programs, initiated and sponsored by the general Department of Education, there have been excellent cooperation and participation such as the *Hidon Hatanach*, the *Yediat Israel* project, and the National Commission on the Teaching of Israel. Yet, the suggestion that there be *one* National Advisory Committee for both Departments was summarily rejected by the Torah Department in Jerusalem. As a result, two Advisory Committees were organized with Dr. Emanuel Rackman serving as chairman of both.

To be sure, the Torah Department concentrates its activities mainly in the Orthodox Day Schools, but it also has initiated and conducted projects directed to all Jewish schools and Bureaus of Jewish Education. No one can quarrel *with the right of the Torah Department to do so*. However, there have been times when both Departments conducted special projects at the same time directed to

the same clientele, and schools were confused and reluctant to participate, questioning the educational value of conducting a multiplicity of programs under different auspices in the limited school time at their disposal. To some degree there is a prevailing feeling that the Departments duplicate activities and compete for the attention of Jewish schools. Under the present organization of the WZO Departments of Education, such feelings are unavoidable.

An example is cited: The American Association for Jewish Education is the authorized body in the United States to conduct the Teachers Exchange Program in cooperation and coordination with both Departments of Education. Israeli teachers invited to serve a three-year period in American Jewish schools are selected in Israel by the respective Education Departments and brought to the United States via contractual arrangements with individual schools by the AAJE. For greater efficiency, affectiveness, and on-going contacts with the Israeli teachers on the job, it would make good sense to engage one full-time qualified Israeli or American educator to give his attention to the expansion of the Teachers Exchange, to arrange conferences and in-service education, and to concern himself with pedagogic and other problems Israeli teachers are confronted with in adjusting to a new environment and in teaching American Jewish children and youth.

*The Matter of Budget.* The Department's budget (approximately \$300,000 per annum) is miniscule in the context of \$250 million spent on Jewish education in the United States. With virtually

\* The Torah Education Department and the Department of (General Jewish) Education and Culture.

no increase in budget in the last four or five years commensurate with the rising inflation, the Department has been hardput to maintain its activities, let alone expand its work. Conceivably, the limited budget allocated to the Department is based on the assumption that the affluent American Jewish community should take care of its own educational needs and WZO funds could be used more beneficially by the global Department of Education to bolster Jewish education in countries of distress and in Israel itself.

However, Zionist leaders in Israel and in the United States recognize that while the American Jewish community must meet its responsibility in strengthening Jewish identity and education, the crisis in Jewish education is so serious (the declining school enrollment, the shortage of qualified teaching personnel, the diminishing emphasis on Hebrew language instruction, and the inadequate teaching of Israel, etc.) that Israel has a definite and significant role to play in extending its assistance to solve the urgent educational problems. Furthermore, the Israel Dimension in American Jewish education has not as yet been clearly defined, nor has Israel in its historic and contemporary context become an integral part of the school curriculum. What is happening in Jewish community life where Israel has become the central focus of Jewish interests and concerns is not as yet reflected in the Jewish school curriculum. This is a vital challenge and task for the WZO Departments of Education. Their work will take on greater significance if and when the educational and the organized

Jewish community give them the opportunity to participate more fully in shaping educational policy and jointly with them introduce content and methods designed to upgrade and update the curriculum, especially as it relates to Israel, the Hebrew language, and other areas of study and experience, and if the WZO provides the Departments with the wherewithal to carry out their goals.

How much should the WZO allocate to Jewish education? One of the elements in Zionist ideology is the assumption by Israel of comprehensive responsibility for Jewish existence, i.e., the unity of the Jewish People, the fostering of Jewish identity and Jewish education, especially in the light of current conditions of geographic dispersion, assimilation, and cultural and linguistic fragmentation. The espousal of this conviction in practice—and Zionist leaders have loudly proclaimed that Jewish education is a primary concern and need—calls for the allocation of suitably substantial funds. It is true that American Jewry is affluent and must carry the major responsibility for its own spiritual and cultural survival, but it is also true that the opportunities for strengthening Jewish identity are greater in the United States than other countries of the Diaspora, and the funds allocated to expand the Israel dimension in Jewish schooling will be well spent.

Still, it cannot be expected that unlimited funds will be available. Consequently, the Department in the United States needs to reorder its priorities, keeping in mind the reality without losing sight of the desideratum and do what it can, but not attempt to do the

impossible, nor aim at unachievable goals. It means that the Department will add some ingredients toward the expansion and improvement in Jewish education, but, mainly, will be serving in the capacity of stimulant and catalyst and encouraging educational institutions to initiate and engage in educational programs of far-reaching significance by intensifying the teaching of Israel and the Hebrew language, by cementing Israel-Diaspora relations by thorough programs to bring youth and college students to Israel, by encouraging teachers to study in Israel, by experimenting with new methods and materials of teaching Hebrew and other school subjects, and by providing pedagogic services.

### *Looking Ahead*

Several years ago the American Association for Jewish Education and its affiliated organizations adopted a declaration which emphasized that the land of Israel occupies "three dimensions in the consciousness of the Jewish people: memory, aspiration, and reality" and called upon Jewish schools to give "recognition to the importance of Israel in planning the curriculum for students in the elementary and high-school grades."

It has become evident in the last ten years that Jewish educators by and large aspire to have children, youth, and adults know and understand Israel in all its ramifications—historic, religious, social, cultural, political—so as to identify with it personally and actively. There is no doubt in my mind that the time is ripe for the Department to

develop a more comprehensive program to carry out the mandate of the AAJE declaration. The establishment of the State has brought in its wake a radical change and transformation of Jewish life everywhere. Jewish education, if it is to reflect the changing conditions in an ever-changing society, must ultimately reassess the status of the Jew in the Diaspora and change the school curriculum accordingly. The centrality of Israel in the curriculum may then reflect the dominant role of Israel in Jewish life today.

What is needed is a balanced and coordinated effort along the following lines:

1. The continuous examination and definition of teaching Israel in relation to the Jewish condition throughout the world in all ages.
2. The re-examination of the school curriculum as to the place of Israel in the classical curriculum with the and in view of integrating the past and the present.
3. The continuous search for multimedia methods designed to make the *cognitive* and *affective* an integrative process leading to identification with Israel, commitment to its future survival, and participation in its upbuilding as well as personal aspiration and realization.

It is to this end that the Department must lend its effort, and building on its experience to date, expand and re-order the priorities of its program. Several suggestions are outlined briefly in the pages that follow.

*The Jewish School Curriculum.* An

elementary school *Pedagogic Division* should be established. Some progress has been made in the teaching of Israel via the *Yediat Israel* project and the National Commission on the Teaching of Israel. The Department should assume full responsibility for preparing, in English and Hebrew, curriculum guidelines on different age levels for the supplemental elementary and secondary schools and the day schools. To be sure, the teaching of Israel cannot be *monolithic in content and method*. The curriculum guidelines will have to take into account the different ideological approaches to Jewish life and education but, at the same time, underscore the *commonality, unity, and consensus* that a creative Jewish life today is inconceivable without Israel. The Pedagogic Division will require a qualified staff of American and Israeli educators and will have to function in consultation and cooperation with its correspondent Pedagogic Division of the Department in Jerusalem, the Israel Ministry of Education and Culture, as well as the National Education Commissions in the United States in the preparation of suitable texts and materials, experimentation in-service education, research, and evaluation.

The teaching of Hebrew will need careful planning, programming, and promotion. Presently the Department does not include in its program Hebrew language instruction in the elementary and secondary schools. It is strongly recommended that the Pedagogic Division incorporate this aspect of Hebrew study among its activities. Programming for Israeli holiday celebrations, music, drama, dance, and other informal co-

curricular activities should also be included in this division of the Department's responsibilities.

*Youth Education.* Curriculum guidelines for teaching Israel to adolescents is an unmet need in the United States. A fivefold program is proposed as follows:

1. The preparation of a formal study curriculum on Israel with suitable texts, audiovisual materials, etc.
2. The development of a more comprehensive program of short-term summer and winter study tours in Israel. A summer study period in Israel should become a mandatory part of secondary Jewish schooling in the United States. It will be necessary to convince central educational agencies and the local Federations to accept study in Israel as an integral part of Jewish youth education and to provide the scholarships for the purpose.
3. A longer period of study in Israel is another dimension of Jewish education for youth. The expansion of the America-Israel Secondary School Program is imperative. More than 10 years have passed since the inception of high-school study in Israel. The establishment\* of the National Committee on High-School Study in Israel during my incumbency is in its early stages of development. It should be strengthened and given the wherewithal and the staff to carry out an ever-expanding program in cooperation with all the educational organizations interested in providing youth with an opportunity to live and study



- in Israel. To be fully successful, a correspondent committee on high-school study will have to be established in Israel. Its major tasks should be finding suitable living accommodations and supervising high-school study in conjunction with the Ministry of Education and Culture.
4. The climate is propitious for the establishment of youth Ulpanim in the United States with a minimum of 4 hours of instruction per week and steps should be taken to promote and partially finance such Ulpanim and also to bring youth to Israel during the summer for more intensive Hebrew language study. This work should be done in cooperation with the American Zionist Youth Foundation and the other youth organizations in the United States. Ulpanim at summer camps is another way of providing American youth with the opportunity to study Hebrew.
  5. Close to 70 public high schools in 27 cities in 13 states teach Hebrew as a modern language to some 7,000 students. It should be possible to increase the enrollment and also to provide more suitable texts and materials if the National Council for Hebrew Culture, presently supported minimally by the Department, were adequately funded and provided with additional personnel.

#### *Teacher Education*

1. The Teachers Exchange Program needs to be reassessed, expanded, and improved. In the United States, both WZO Departments of Education,

the American Association for Jewish Education, and the Ideological Commissions on Jewish Education should make greater efforts to coordinate their activities. It should be made clear to the Department in Israel that it is desirable to conduct *one* program in the United States to avoid duplication and expense and *one* full-time person should be engaged by the Departments to work in close cooperation with the AAJE in the implementation of the program which should include: continuous information and interpretation, in-service education and conferences, on-going contact with schools that engage Israeli teachers, and evaluation of effectiveness.

2. The word "exchange" implies that American Jewish teachers be given an equal opportunity to serve in Israel. Steps should be taken to provide them with full and part-time teaching positions in Israel and also for study and in-service education.
3. With proper motivation and incentives, it should be possible to bring to Israel young American Jews who may choose Jewish education as their profession. It will require a united effort on the part of the Center for Jewish Education in the Diaspora of The Hebrew University, the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Greenberg College, and other institutions in preparing teachers for the Diaspora. In the United States, the Department will have to enlist the cooperation of the principals of Hebrew High Schools and the heads of the Hebrew Teacher Training Schools.

4. Summer In-Service Education in Israel for teachers and principals should soon become a reality. It should be tied in with licensing, salary increases, and increments for teachers. In this effort, local central agencies for Jewish educators and Federations will have to be convinced that in-service education in Israel will redound to the benefit of Jewish schooling.
5. There are hundreds of Israelis who are now teaching Hebrew in America, but who are not trained as teachers. American educators need to give their attention to this phenomenon. Provision has to be made for in-service education for them too, in order for them to do their work more effectively in the Jewish schools where they are teaching on a part-time basis.

*Community Pedagogic Consultants.* It would be desirable to have an Israeli community pedagogic advisor or consultant attached to the large bureaus of Jewish education, such as those in Los Angeles, Chicago, New York, and Miami, to strengthen the Israel dimension in the local community school curricula and to carry out the activities of the Department on a local community level.

#### *Adult Education and Culture*

1. The model of the Ulpan Center in New York should be introduced in the larger Jewish communities. The establishment of a national chain of Ulpan Centers will require funding and additional personnel. A cooperative relationship will have to be

developed with the Jewish centers in the United States via the Jewish Welfare Board, the American Zionist Federation, and its constituent organizations, the National Council for Adult Jewish Education, and all organizations and institutions engaged in adult education.

2. As part of the Ulpanim, participants should be exposed to aspects of Israel's culture such as music, drama, dance, social and cultural issues, and education. Arranging for Ulpan study in Israel should also become an imperative objective.
3. Hebrew literature and culture should be brought to Hebrew speaking individuals. Exposure of American Jews to Israel literati is an unmet need.
4. In cooperation with the World Jewish Bible Society, the Department should become active in the establishment of Bible Study groups throughout the country.

It would be advisable and desirable for the Department to establish an *Adult Education Division* to evolve the activities and needed programs related to Israel for adults.

*Judaic Departments in the Universities.* The promotion\* and introduction of Hebrew studies in the universities is not within the present framework of the Department's activities. Some 25 years ago, the Hebrew Culture Foundation was established as a separate tax-exempt organization to promote the study of Hebrew language and literature in the universities. The Department has served without cost as the administrative arm

to the Hebrew Culture Foundation. The funds of the HCF are limited to about \$40,000 received annually from the WZO used entirely as "seed money" to encourage universities to introduce modern Hebrew into the curriculum. The HCF has an excellent record of success as my report of 1977 indicates. It is desirable and imperative to provide increased funds to the HCF for the expansion of Hebrew studies among college students. The Department should continue to serve in the same capacity as heretofore. The Department should also serve the HCF by periodic contact with Hebrew language instructors, periodic seminars and conferences, keeping Hebrew language instructors abreast of new materials and methods.

Another aspect of the Department's work would help strengthen Hebrew language and literature study by bringing students of Hebrew studies to Israel for short- or long-term periods of study.

*Research and Follow-Up.* What effect and influence has the experience in Israel had on the participants in the variety of educational programs under the auspices of the Department? There is an urgent need for follow-up and investigation as to the effectiveness and influence of Israel in terms of Jewish identity, commitment, and activities. The Department should, in conjunction and cooperation with participating educational institutions and especially the National Curriculum Research Institute of the American Association for Jewish Education, undertake to initiate a program of research and evaluation.

In summary: Israel has an important role to play in all levels of Jewish education. As yet, the WZO has not harnessed the forces that are potentially able to enhance the dimension of Israel in American Jewish life. What is needed is a broad plan of operation and the necessary funds to implement it.